

available. As for the inflation assembly, complicated and expensive fluid-providing and/or distributing components are common place in these prior art medical devices.

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The inventor of the present invention appreciated that a relatively simple, inexpensive message device intended for relaxation and other personal, non-medical uses in an unsupervised and unattended setting (such as in-home use) could have many advantages and applications. The inventor further appreciated, however, that many of the features of prior art compression devices which are acceptable in a supervised medical setting, would not be satisfactory in such an unsupervised and unattended setting.

II. IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend Claims 1-8 and 10, and add Claims 89-106 as follows:

1. (Amended) A message device for massaging a body part of a person in an unsupervised and unattended setting, said message device comprising:

a garment for enclosing the body part, the garment having a plurality of bladders arranged along the garment to massage the body part, each of said bladders substantially encircling a portion of the body part; and

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an inflation assembly which supplies fluid pressure to each of the bladders to inflate the respective bladders;

wherein each of the bladders has approximately the same inflated volume thereby equalizing the inflation volume of the respective bladders whereby substantially even inflation timing, with substantially even applied pressure, and, thus, overall smooth massage dynamics may be provided without overly complicated inflation fluid control.

2. (Amended) A massage device for massaging a body part of a person in an unsupervised and unattended setting, said massage device comprising:

a garment for enclosing the body part, the garment having a plurality of bladders arranged along the garment to massage the body part, each of said bladders substantially encircling a portion of the body part; and

an inflation assembly which supplies fluid pressure to each of the bladders to inflate the respective bladders;

wherein the garment is shaped to accommodate the lower leg portion of the user's body, wherein bottom bladders massage the user's foot and top bladders massage the user's calf, and wherein the sheets include a notch on at least one lateral side of the garment separating the bottom bladders from the top bladders whereby the garment may provide a snug fit to user.

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3. (Amended) A massage device for massaging a body part of a person in an unsupervised and unattended setting, said massage device comprising:

a garment for enclosing the body part, the garment having a plurality of bladders arranged along the garment to massage the body part, each of said bladders substantially encircling a portion of the body part; and

an inflation assembly which supplies fluid pressure to each of the bladders to inflate the respective bladders;

wherein the garment includes a pocket along substantially the entire length of at least one lateral side of the garment having an opening communicating with the respective bladders and wherein the inflation assembly including a source of inflation fluid and tubing extending from this source into the pocket.

4. (Amended) A massage device for massaging a body part of a person in an unsupervised and unattended setting, said massage device comprising:

a garment for enclosing the body part, the garment having a plurality of bladders arranged along the garment to massage the body part, each of said bladders substantially encircling a portion of the body part; and

an inflation assembly which supplies fluid pressure to each of the bladders to inflate the respective bladders;

wherein the garment includes a loop fastening strip and a complimentary hook fastening strip which, when engaged with each other, form a hook-and-loop attachment;

wherein the loop fastening strip is secured to the inner sheet and the hook fastening strip is secured to the outer sheet;

wherein the loop fastening strips is secured to the inner sheet laterally inward from pull handles and over and laterally beyond a tubing pocket and wherein the hook fastening strip is secured to the outer sheet adjacent its longitudinal edge.

5. (Amended) A massage device for massaging a body part of a person in an unsupervised and unattended setting, said massage device comprising:

a garment for enclosing the body part, the garment having a plurality of bladders arranged along the garment to massage the body part, each of said bladders substantially encircling a portion of the body part; and

an inflation assembly which supplies a substantially constant inflation capacity to each of the bladders.

6. (Amended) A massage device for massaging a body part of a person in an unsupervised and unattended setting, said massage device comprising:

a garment for enclosing the body part, the garment having a plurality of bladders arranged along the garment to massage the body part, each of said bladders substantially encircling a portion of the body part; and

an inflation assembly which selectively inflates and deflates the bladders;

wherein, during deflation of the bladders, the inflation fluid flows through exhaust lines and wherein at least some of the exhaust lines include a throttling device.

7. (Amended) A massage device for massaging a body part of a person in an unsupervised and unattended setting, said massage device comprising:

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a garment for enclosing the body part, the garment having a plurality of bladders arranged along the garment to massage the body part, each of said bladders substantially encircling a portion of the body part; and

an inflation assembly which selectively inflates and deflates the bladders;

wherein inflation of a bladder is underway prior to complete deflation of the previously inflated bladder.

8. (Amended) A massage device for massaging a body part of a person in an unsupervised and unattended setting, said massage device comprising:

a garment for enclosing the body part, the garment having a plurality of bladders arranged along the garment to massage the body part, each of said bladders substantially encircling a portion of the body part; and

an inflation assembly which selectively inflates and deflates the bladders;

wherein the inflation assembly includes a zone selector which allows a user to select a certain zone of the garment.

10. (Amended) A massage device for massaging a body part of a person in an unsupervised and unattended setting, said massage device comprising:

a garment for enclosing the body part, the garment having a plurality of bladders arranged along the garment to massage the body part, each of said bladders substantially encircling a portion of the body part; and

an inflation assembly which supplies fluid pressure to each of the bladders to inflate the respective bladders;

wherein each of the bladders has approximately the same inflated volume thereby equalizing the inflation volume of the respective bladders whereby substantially even inflation timing, with substantially even applied pressure, and, thus, overall smooth massage dynamics may be provided without overly complicated inflation fluid control; and

wherein necking seams are positioned relative to certain bladders to provide at least some of the bladders with approximately the same inflated volume.

Added Claims:

89. An inflatable garment for use in association with an inflation assembly comprising a plurality of inflation bladders to apply pressure to a body part, wherein each of the bladders substantially encircles a portion of the body part, and each of the bladders has approximately the same inflated volume.

90. An inflatable garment as set forth in claim 89 wherein, when inflated, each of the bladders apply substantially equal pressure to the body part.

91. An inflatable garment as set forth in claim 89, wherein the garment is made of two opposing sheets and wherein seams between the sheets define the bladders.

By 92. An inflatable garment as set forth in claim 91, wherein necking seams are positioned relative to one or more bladders to create corresponding necked bladders, wherein the bladders which are not necked bladders are unnecked bladders, and wherein the necking seams are intended to decrease the inflated volume of the necked bladders.

93. An inflatable garment as set forth in claim 92, wherein the shape of the necked bladders is substantially similar to the shape of the unnecked bladders.

94. An inflatable garment as set forth in claim 93, wherein the shape of the necked bladders is substantially rectangular.

95. An inflatable garment as set forth in claim 93, wherein the inflatable garment is shaped to accommodate a lower leg portion of a user, and wherein top bladders which encircle a user's calf are necked bladders, and bottom bladders which encircle the user's foot are unnecked bladders.

96. An inflatable garment as set forth in claim 89, wherein the inflatable garment is shaped to accommodate a lower leg portion of a user, and wherein the garment includes a notch on each lateral side which separate the bladders into one or more bottom bladders and one or more top bladders.

97. An inflatable garment as set forth in claim 89, wherein the inflatable garment includes a pocket having one or more openings for communicating with the respective bladders, and wherein the massage device further includes inflation tubing extending from the inflation assembly into the pocket.

98. An inflatable garment as set forth in claim 97, wherein the inflatable garment is shaped to accommodate a lower leg portion of a user, wherein the garment includes a notch on each lateral side which separate the bladders into one or more bottom bladders and one or more top bladders, and wherein the pocket includes one or more slots adjacent one of the notches to provide an entry passage for the inflation tubing into a top portion and a bottom portion of the pocket.

99. A massage device for use in an unsupervised and unattended setting, the massage device comprising:

an inflatable garment having a plurality of inflation bladders to apply pressure to a body part wherein each of the bladders has approximately the same inflated volume;

an inflation assembly for providing pressurized fluid to the bladders to the respective bladders; and

means for equalizing inflation volume of each of the bladders.

100. A massage device as set forth in claim 99 further comprising means for equalizing inflation time of each of the bladders.

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101. A massage device as set forth in claim 99 further comprising means for equalizing applied pressure of each of the bladders.

102. A massage device for use in an unsupervised and unattended setting, the massage device comprising:

an inflatable garment having a plurality of inflation bladders to apply pressure to a body part;

an inflation assembly for providing pressurized fluid to the bladders to the respective bladders; and

means for providing a snug fit of the inflatable garment on a user.

103. A method of massaging a body part in an unsupervised and unattended setting, the method comprising:

providing an inflatable garment having a plurality of inflation bladders to apply pressure to a body part wherein each of the bladders has approximately the same inflated volume;

inflating the bladders;

deflating the bladders; and

equalizing inflation volume of each of the bladders.

104. A method of massaging a body part as set forth in claim 103 further comprising equalizing inflation time of each of the bladders.

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By 105. A method of massaging a body part as set forth in claim 103 further comprising equalizing applied pressure of each of the bladders.

106. A method of massaging a body part in an unsupervised and unattended setting, the method comprising:

providing an inflatable garment having a plurality of inflation bladders to apply pressure to a body part;

inflating the bladders;

deflating the bladders; and

providing a snug fit of the inflatable garment on a user.